

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

In response to the Election Requirement dated January 20, 2004 Applicants elect with traverse Figures 1-11 (Species 1), and identify Claims 1-5 and 17-21 as reading on the elected species 1.

The Election Requirement asserts that the application contains claims to distinct species. However, MPEP § 803 states the following:

If the search and examination of an entire application can be made without serious burden, the Examiner must examine it on the merits, even though it includes claims to distinct or independent inventions.

Although the outstanding Official Action identifies different search classifications, it is believed that the claims of the present application would have to be searched in only a small handful of overlapping sub-classes. Furthermore, since electronic searching is commonly performed, a search may be made of a large number of, or theoretically all, subclasses without substantial additional effort. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully traverse the Election Requirement on the grounds that a search and examination of the entire application would not place a *serious* burden on the Examiner, whereas it would be a serious burden on Applicants to prosecute and maintain separate applications.

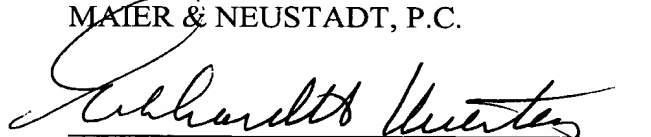
Accordingly, examination on the merits is believed to be in order and an early and favorable action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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